being previously communicated independently of and externally to a network portion having the server; and

if user-input information sent from the user terminal to the server is received, processing the indexed electronic files according to the received user-input information in a manner that allows the processing to use the stored electronic characteristics of the electronic files.

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4. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein storing the electronic files in the storage system, including storing and indexing the electronic characteristics associated with the native format of the electronic files comprises:

recursively extracting a plurality of electronic files that have been previously exchanged, between parties, independently of and externally to the network portion having the server;

identifying a plurality of objects having different data formats for each of the extracted electronic files, one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;

storing data associated with the one of the identified objects in a first location in the storage system;

converting the other identified objects and storing data associated with the converted objects in a second location in the storage system; and

indexing the data stored in the first and second locations.

5. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein storing the electronic files comprises:

storing data associated with text content of the electronic files in a first server unit; and

storing data associated with metadata content of the electronic files in a second server unit having a database.

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6.　(Twice Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing a user interface at the user terminal, the user interface comprising a field to enter search query information and a display to display processing summary information associated with the electronic files stored in the storage system.

7.　(Twice Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein processing the indexed electronic files comprises:

selecting one of the stored electronic files based on the user-input information

transmitting a copy of the selected electronic file for display at the user terminal;

receiving from the user terminal processing summary information associated with the displayed electronic file; and

storing the processing summary information in the storage system to allow the processing information and their corresponding electronic file to be subsequently retrieved.

8.　(Twice Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic files comprise email messages having attachment files, the method further comprising:

separating the attachment files from the email messages;

converting the attachment files into a first format and storing the converted attachment files in the storage system; and

converting the email messages into a second format and storing the converted email messages in the storage system.

9.　(Twice Amended) A method to display stored electronic legal documents, the method comprising:

providing a first field to allow entry of search query information directed towards the stored electronic legal documents, wherein the electronic legal documents comprise electronic documents that have been previously communicated between parties independently of and externally to an interface that provides the first field;

providing a window to display a representation of an electronic legal document retrieved in response to the entered search query information, the electronic legal document

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being retrievable by matching the search query information with stored electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic legal documents; and

providing a plurality of second fields to allow entry of and to save processing information associated with the displayed representation of the electronic legal document.

10.   (Twice Amended) The method of claim 9 wherein the electronic legal documents comprise email messages having threading information and wherein matching the search query information with the stored electronic characteristics comprises providing search results including threading information of email messages.

11.   (Twice Amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

providing summary fields having summary information associated with the stored electronic legal documents; and

providing the summary fields with links that, if activated, trigger a display of representations of electronic legal documents corresponding to the activated links.

12.   (Twice Amended) The method of claim 9, further comprising:

providing search result fields having search result information associated with the search query information; and

providing the search result fields with links that, if activated, trigger a display of representations of electronic legal documents corresponding to the activated links.

13.   (Twice Amended) A method, comprising:

recursively extracting a plurality of electronic files that can be subject to a legal proceeding, each of the electronic files having electronic characteristics that are associated with a native format of the electronic file and that uniquely identify the electronic files from each other, the electronic files being previously communicated between parties independently of and externally to a network portion that performs the extracting;

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for each of the extracted electronic files, identifying a plurality of objects having different data formats, one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;

storing data associated with the one of the identified objects in a first location in a database system;

converting the other identified objects and storing data associated with the converted objects in a second location in the database system; and

indexing the data stored in the first and second locations.

14. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 13 wherein recursively extracting the plurality of electronic files comprises extracting electronic files located in a plurality of paths in a directory structure.

17. (Twice Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a server comprising part of a network portion and being communicatively coupled to a database system, the database system having stored and indexed therein electronic documents and electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic documents, the electronic documents being previously communicated between parties independently of and externally to the network portion having the server, the server responsive to a search query to search the database system for electronic documents matching the search query, the server being configured to use indexing information and the stored electronic characteristics to provide search results that are responsive to the search query.

18. (Twice Amended) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the server stores user-input information associated with representations of electronic documents, the user-input information being stored by the server in the database system and being retrievable by the server in response to subsequent search queries.

19. (Twice Amended) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the electronic documents comprise email messages having threading information, the electronic characteristics

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of the electronic documents including the threading information, the server being configured to provide the search results to the user node along with email messages and their corresponding threading information.

20.   (Twice Amended) A system, comprising:

a conversion engine to convert electronic files, which can be subject to a legal proceeding, into a database format, the conversion engine being configured to identify electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic files; and

a network portion having a server coupleable to the conversion engine and communicatively coupled to a database system, the database system having stored and indexed therein the electronic files converted by the conversion engine and the electronic characteristics identified by the conversion engine, the electronic files being previously communicated between parties independently of and externally to the network portion, wherein the server is responsive to a search query to search the database system for electronic files matching the search query, wherein the server is configured to use the indexing information and the electronic characteristics to provide search results that are responsive to the search query.

21.   (Twice Amended) The system of claim 20 wherein the conversion engine is structured to load the electronic files into the database system, the conversion engine including:

at least one recursive engine to recursively extract a plurality of electronic files that can be subject to a legal proceeding;

at least one controller coupled to the recursive engine to identify a plurality of objects having different data formats for each of the extracted electronic files, one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;

an upload unit coupled to the controller to store data associated with the one of the identified objects in a first location in the database system; and

at least one converter coupled to the controller to convert the other identified objects and to store text data associated with the converted objects in a second location in the database system, wherein

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the data stored in the first and second locations are indexed.

23.   (Twice Amended)   A machine-readable medium containing a data structure of electronic file information comprising a plurality of first tables having indexing information associated with a text content of electronic files that can be subject to a legal proceeding, a second plurality of tables having indexing information associated with metadata content of the electronic files, the indexing information in the second tables corresponding to electronic characteristics associated with a native format of the electronic files, the electronic files being previously communicated between parties independently of and externally to a network portion having the data structure.

28.   (Twice Amended)   A machine-readable medium having stored therein instructions, which when executed by a processor, cause the processor to perform the following, comprising:

provide access to electronic legal documents stored in a storage system, the electronic legal documents being previously communicated independently of and externally to a network portion having the storage system, the stored electronic legal documents being stored and indexed in the storage system along with electronic characteristics associated with the native format of the electronic legal documents; and

if user-input information is received, process the indexed electronic legal documents according to the received user-input information and by using the stored electronic characteristics.

29.   (Twice Amended)   The machine-readable medium of claim 28 wherein the processor further performs the following, comprising:

if user-input information including a text content search query is received, search the stored electronic legal documents using indexing information associated with textual content of the stored electronic legal documents; and

if user-input information including a metadata search query is received, search the stored electronic legal documents using indexing information associated with metadata content of the stored electronic legal documents.

30. (Twice Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim 28 wherein the stored electronic legal documents comprise email messages and wherein the processor searches for individual email messages based on user-input information including a search query of metadata content or text content of the email messages.

33. (Twice Amended) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the electronic documents comprise electronic legal documents.

43. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

at least one recursive engine to recursively extract a plurality of electronic files that can be subject to legal proceeding, each of the electronic files having electronic characteristics that are associated with a native format of the electronic files and that uniquely identify the electronic files from each other, the electronic files being previously communicated independently of and externally to a network portion that includes the recursive engine;

at least one controller coupled to the recursive engine to identify, for each of the extracted files, a plurality of objects having different data formats, one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;

a first storage location coupled to the controller to store data associated with the one of the identified objects corresponding to the electronic characteristics;

at least one converter coupled to the controller to convert the other identified objects; and

a second storage location coupled to the converter to store text data associated with the converted objects, wherein the data stored in the first and second storage locations are indexed.

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